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A ~~57~~ DECLARATION OF THE LORD GENERALL AND HIS COUNCELL of OFFICERS;

Shewing the Grounds and Reasons for the Dissolution of the late PARLIAMENT.

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A Declaration of the Lord General and his Councell of Officers.

OUR Intention is not to give an account at this time of the Grounds, which first moved us to take up Armes, and engage our Lives and all that was deare unto us, in this Cauſe; nor to mind in this Declaration the various Diſpenſations through which Divine Providence hath led us, or the witneſſe the Lord hath borne, and the many ſignall Teſtimonies of acceptance, which he hath given to the ſincere endeavours of his unworthy Servants, whileſt they were conteſting with the many and great difficulties as well in the Wars, as other Tranſactions in the three Nations; being neceſſitated, for the defence of the ſame Cauſe they firſt aſſerted, to have recourſe unto extraordinary actions, the ſame being evident by former Declarations publiſhed on that behalfe.

After it had pleaſed God not onely to reduce *Ireland*, and give in *Scotland*, but ſo marvellouſly to appeare for his People at *Worceſter*, that thoſe Nations were reduced to a great degree of Peace, and *England* to perfect quiet, and thereby the Parliament had opportunity to give the people the harveſt of all their labour, blood, and treaſure, and to ſettle a due Liberty both in reference to civil and

ſpiritual things, whereunto they were obliged by their duty, their engagements, as alſo the great and wonderful things, which God had wrought for them: It was matter of much grief to the good and wel-affected of the Land, to obſerve the little progreſs, which was made therein; who thereupon applied to the Army, expecting Redreſs by their means: Notwithſtanding which, the Army being unwilling to meddle with the Civil Authority, in matters ſo properly appertaining to it, it was agreed, That his Excellency and Officers of the Army, which were Members of Parliament, ſhould be deſired to move the Parliament to proceed vigorouſly in Reforming what was amiſs in Government, and to the ſetling of the Commonwealth, upon a Foundation of Juſtice and Righteouſneſs; which having done, We hoped that the Parliament would ſeaſonably have anſwered our expectation; but finding (to our grief) delayes therein, We renewed our deſires in an humble Petition to them, which was preſented in *Auguſt* laſt: And although, they at that time, ſignifying their good acceptance thereof, returned us thanks, and referred the particulars thereof to a Committee of the Houſe; yet no conſiderable effect was produced, nor any ſuch progreſs made, as might imply their real intentions to accompliſh what was petitioned for: But on the contrary, there more and more appeared amongſt them an averſion to the things themſelves, with much bitterneſs, and oppoſition to the people of God, and his Spirit acting in them; which grew ſo *prevalent*, that thoſe perſons of honor and integrity amongſt them, who had eminently appeared for God, and the publick good both before and *throughout* this *war*, werer endred of

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no further uſe in Parliament, then by meeting with a corrupt party to give them countenance to carry on their ends, and for effecting the deſire they had of perpetuating themſelves in the Supream Government. For which purpoſe, the ſaid Party long oppoſed, and frequently declared themſelves againſt having a new Repreſentative: And when they ſaw themſelves neceſſitated to take that Bill into conſideration, they reſolved to make uſe of it to recruit the Houſe with Perſons of the ſame Spirit and Temper, thereby to perpetuate their own ſitting. Which intention divers of the activeſt amongſt them did manifeſt, labouring to perſwade others to a conſent therein: And the better to effect this, divers Petitions preparing from ſeveral Counties for the continuance of this Parliament were encouraged, if not ſet on foot by many of them.

For obviating of theſe evils, the Officers of the Army obtained ſeveral meetings, with ſome of the Parliament, to conſider what fitting means and remedy might be applied to prevent the ſame: But ſuch endeavours proving altogether ineffectual, it became moſt evident to the Army, as they doubt not it alſo is to all conſidering Perſons, that this Parliament, through the corruption of ſome, the jealouſie of others, the non-attendance and negligence of many, would never anſwer thoſe ends which God, his People, and the whole Nation ex-

pected from them: But that this Cauſe which the Lord hath ſo greatly bleſſed, and bore witneſs to, muſt needs languiſh under their hands, and by degrees be wholly loſt, and the lives, liberties and comforts of his People delivered into their Enemies hands.

All which being ſadly and ſeriouſly conſidered by the honeſt People of this Nation, as well as by the Army, and wiſdom and direction being ſought from the Lord; it ſeemed to be a Duty incumbent upon us, who had ſeen ſo much of the power and preſence of God going along with us, to conſider of ſome more effectual means to ſecure the Cauſe which the good People of this Commonwealth had been ſo long engaged in, and to eſtabliſh righteouſneſs and peace in theſe Nations.

And after much debate it was judged neceſſary and agreed upon, that the Supream Authority ſhould be by the Parliament devolved upon known Perſons, men fearing God, and of approved integrity, and the Government of the Commonwealth committed unto them for a time, as the moſt hopeful way to encourage and countenance all Gods People, reform the Law, and adminiſter Juſtice impartially: Hoping thereby the People might forget Monarchy, and underſtanding their true Intereſt in the Election of Succeſſive Parliaments, may have the Government ſetled upon a true Baſis, without hazard to this glorious Cauſe, or neceſſitating

to

to keep up Armies for the defence of the ſame. And being ſtill reſolved to uſe all means poſsible to avoid extraordinary courſes, we prevailed with about twenty Members of Parliament to give us a Confernnce, with whom we freely and plainly debated the neceſsity and juſtneſs of our Propoſals on that behalf: And did evidence that thoſe, and not the Act under their conſideration, would moſt probably bring forth ſomething anſwerable to that Work, the Foundation whereof God himſelf hath laid, and is now carrying on in the World.

The which notwithſtanding, found no acceptance, but inſtead thereof, it was offered, that the way was to continue ſtill this preſent Parliament, as being that from which we might reaſonably expect all good things. And this being vehemently inſiſted upon, did much confirm us in our apprehenſions, that not any Love to a Repreſentative, but the making uſe thereof to recruit, and ſo perpetuate themſelves, was their aym.

They being plainly dealt with about this, and told, that neither the Nation, the Honeſt Intereſt, nor we our ſelves would be deluded by ſuch dealings: they did agree to meet again the next day in the afternoon for mutual ſatisfaction, it being conſented unto by the Members preſent, that endeavours ſhould be uſed, that nothing in the mean time ſhould be done in Parliament that might exclude or

fruſtrate the Propoſals before mentioned.

Notwithſtanding this, the next morning the Parliament did make more haſte then uſual, in carrying on their ſaid Act, being helped on therein by ſome of the perſons engaged to us the night before; none of them which were then preſent, endeavouring to oppoſe the ſame: And being ready to put the main Queſtion for conſummating the ſaid Act, whereby our aforeſaid Propoſals would have been rendred void, and the way of bringing them into a fair and full debate in Parliament obſtructed; for preventing whereof, and all the ſad and evil conſequences, which muſt upon the grounds aforeſaid have enſued, and whereby at one blow the Intereſt of all honeſt men, and of this glorious Cauſe had been in danger to be laid in the duſt, and theſe Nations embroiled in new Troubles, at a time when our Enemies abroad are watching all advantages againſt us, and ſome of them actually engaged in War with us: We have been neceſſitated, though with much reluctancy, to put an end to this Parliament; which yet we have done (we hope) out of an honeſt heart, preferring this Cauſe above our Names, Lives, Families, or Intereſts, how dear ſoever; with clear intentions and real purpoſes of heart, to call to the Government, Perſons of approved fidelity and honeſty, believing, that as none wiſe will expect to gather Grapes of Thorns; ſo good men

will

will hope, that if perſons ſo qualified be choſen, the Fruits of a Juſt and a Righteous Reformation, ſo long prayed and wiſhed for, will, by the bleſſing of God, be in due time obtained, to the refreſhing of all thoſe good Hearts who have been panting after thoſe things.

Much more might have been ſaid, if it had been our deſire to juſtifie our ſelves by aſperſing others, and raking into the miſ-government of Affairs; but we ſhall conclude with this, That as we have been led by Neceſſity and Providence, to act as we have done, even beyond and above our own thoughts and deſires: ſo we ſhall, and do, in that of this great Work which is behind, put our ſelves wholly upon the Lord for a bleſſing; profeſſing, we look not to ſtand one day without his ſupport, much leſs to bring to paſs any of the things mentioned and deſired, without his aſſiſtance, and therefore do ſolemnly deſire and expect, that all men, as they would not provoke the Lord to their own deſtruction, ſhould wait for ſuch iſſue as he ſhall bring forth, and to follow their buſineſs with peaceable ſpirits; wherein we promiſe them Protection by his aſſiſtance.

And for thoſe who profeſs their fear and Love to the Name of God, that ſeeing in a great meaſure, for their ſakes, and for righteouſneſs ſake, we have taken our Lives in our hands to do theſe things, they would be in-

ſtant with the Lord day and night on our behalfs, that we may obtain grace from him, and ſeeing we have made ſo often mention of his Name, that we may not do the leaſt diſhonour thereunto: which indeed would be our confuſion, and a ſtain to the whole profeſsion of Godlineſs.

We beſeech them alſo to live in all humility, meekneſs, righteouſneſs and love one towards another, and towards all men, that ſo they may put to ſilence the ignorance of the fooliſh, who falſly accuſe them: and to know, that the late great and glorious diſpenſations wherein the Lord hath ſo wonderfully appeared in bringing forth theſe things by the travel and blood of his Children, ought to oblige them ſo to walk in the wiſdom and love of Chriſt, as may cauſe others to honour their holy profeſsion, becauſe they ſee Chriſt to be in them of a truth.

We do further purpoſe before it be long, more particularly to ſhew the grounds of our Proceedings, and the Reaſons of this late great Action and Change, which in this we have but hinted at.

And we do laſtly declare, That all Judges, Sheriffs, Juſtices of the Peace, Mayors, Bayliffs, Committees and Commiſsioners, and all other Civil Officers and Publick Miniſters

niſters whatſoever, within this Commonwealth, or any parts thereof, do proceed in their reſpective Places and Offices; and all Perſons whatſoever are to give obedience to them as fully as when the Parliament was ſitting.

Signed in the name, and by the appointment of his Excellency the Lord General, and his Councel of Officers.

White-hall, *Apr.* 22. 1653. VVILL. MALYN, Secret.

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